

THE ARROWHEAD

Family Readiness Group Newsletter

Vol. 3

"For the families of those deployed"

December 22, 2003



Greetings from Iraq.

By the time you read this, we will have been in Iraq at our various forward operating bases for threeweeks. We had a difficult time earlier this month when three of our Soldiers died in a Stryker rollover accident. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of these Soldiers, as well as with the Soldiers who served alongside them.

I am proud of our family readiness groups, along with our rear detachment, who have cared for each of these Soldiers' families. You, our FRG's, are tremendously well prepared and continue to make our ability to focus our full attention on the mission easier. We are taking good care of these Soldiers' brothers and friends here in Iraq who carry-on with the mission. We paused December 12th to remember these three heroes. The service was special. We will not forget them.

For the past week the Brigade has conducted operations north of Baghdad to eliminate the threat here and help provide a stable and secure Iraq. All of our soldiers have performed admirably. You can be proud.

It's hard to believe the holidays are here. It's not the same as being at home, but we're making the best of it with our extended "Army Family." The new bases we will move to in the near future will make e-mail and phone communications much easier. In the interim, please keep writing. Mail call is the best time of day!

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukah.
COL Mike Rounds



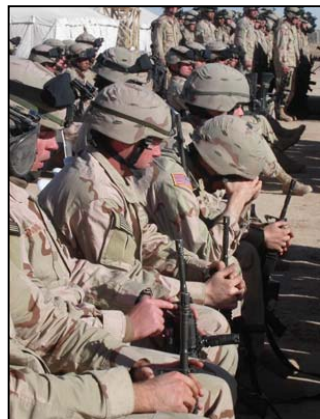
Company B, 1-23 Infantry Soldiers pay tribute to SSG Bridges, SPC Wesley, and SPC Blickenstaff at a memorial service at Camp, Iraq December 12.

Tomahawks bid farewell to fallen comrades

By Sgt. Jeremy Heckler, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division

FORWARD OPERATING BASE, Iraq – A cold wind whipped across the flat plains of as members of 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment paid tribute to three of their own during a morning memorial service Dec. 12.

Staff Sgt. Steven H. Bridges, 33, of Tracy, Calif., Spc. Joseph M. Blickenstaff, 23, of Corvallis, Ore. and Spc. Christopher J. Rivera Wesley, 26, of Portland, Ore., all from Company B, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. died Dec. 8 in Ad Duluiyah, Iraq. The Stryker infantry carrier vehicles from they rode in rolled over into a canal when an embankment collapsed.



The unit is part of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) from Fort Lewis, Wash.

Following the battalion chaplain's invocation, the Soldiers' company commander addressed the Tomahawk battalion and other guests as more than 600 gathered to pay tribute.

"I say that I am a better leader for having served with our three fallen comrades," said Capt. Robert Robinson, commander, Company B.

Capt. Robinson addressed the quality of the three Soldiers, not only the values they brought to their unit, but also to their friends and family within the company.

"Three words I can use to describe these three men are: Soldiers, friends, brothers," said Capt. Robinson.

Staff Sergeant Steven H. Bridges

Bridges was described by fellow Soldiers as the model noncommissioned officer.

"He truly epitomized the NCO motto of 'Be, Know, and Do,'" said Capt. Robinson.

One of Bridges' closest friends, fellow squad leader, Staff Sgt. Michael Robinson, Company B, 2nd squad, 3rd platoon, focused on Bridges' dedication, pausing more than once to gather his emotions.

"He was devoted to his family, and to his Army, and above all he was dedicated to his men," Staff Sgt. Robinson said.

"He always knew what to say to each and every one of us," said Sgt. Jay Hoffman, one of Bridges' team leaders, after the service. Hoffman said if he and Bridges had a disagreement, they would talk about it and by the end of the discussion, they would come to an agreement.

Hoffman said Bridges often took the squad to lunches around Fort Lewis and he invited them over to his home for an early

Thanksgiving dinner in the days before they left on deployment. Each Soldier in the squad carried a rain-worn picture of the occasion that was taken as they stood alongside Bridges' family. "I pray that someday his family will understand the sacrifices their father made for our country and the freedom we enjoy," said Staff. Sgt. Robinson.

The men of Bridges' squad brought a stuffed Army bear to the ceremony with staff sergeant rank and the duty position patch - B33, that he wore on his uniform.

"It [the bear] is a symbol to his memory as well as that of Spc. Wesley," said Spc. Michael, who was entrusted by the rest of 3rd squad to carry it.



He said the bear has been with the squad since Bridges received it in the mail during the Arrowhead Brigade's National Training Center rotation earlier this year. The bear was a gift from Bridges' daughter and once said, "I love you daddy," until the speaker broke. But the sentiment still echoed with the squad.

"It will ride in the vehicle as long as we're in country". "We requested that it stay with us and it has it's own designated spot."

Spc. Christopher J. Wesley

Wesley was described by those who knew him as a go-getter who didn't know how to say no.

"Wesley was quite a character," said Hoffman. "He was always laughing and a hard worker who got the job done quickly and right the first time."

"We all joked around with him and he would laugh it off and not take it seriously," said Spc. Albert Benitez, Company B, one of Wesley's friends.

Benitez spoke of the genuine side of Wesley, a Soldier who would come up to folks and ask them how they were doing and he meant it. Benitez added that Wesley was the kind of guy who didn't want to offend anyone.

Wesley drove the squad's Stryker vehicle as they conducted operations. Hoffman said when the vehicle driver's position became available earlier this year, he took it with the same gusto with which he pursued everything else in his military career.

"He wanted to drive so we put him in the driver's hole," said Hoffman.

Wesley's friends had many accolades during and after the service, that were summed up in these few words.

"On behalf of your Renegade brothers in Bravo Company we know you are very well taken care of, you are in the hands of the Lord," said Benitez. "We thank you for being our friend and for the service you have given to our great nation."

Spc. Joseph M. Blickenstaff

Blickenstaff was remembered as a Soldier who had begun to put it all together just before leaving on deployment.

"By the time we left for Iraq he had settled or had come close to settling almost every problem that had come up," said Pfc. Jesse Murray, Blickenstaff's friend in Company B.

He said Blickenstaff would always come through for his brothers in the company.

"If I ever had a problem he'd have a smart-aleck response, then he'd help me out the best he could," said Murray.

He said Blickenstaff dreamt of his future life playing in a band and sharing his music with the world.



"I only hope now that he can live out his dream playing in heaven with all of the angels," said Murray.

As the ceremony drew to a close, 1st Sgt. Robert Swift, Company B, called the final roll. As the names of the fallen Soldiers drew no reply from the formation, volleys fired in their memory and "Taps" played in the distance for those whose physical presence was symbolized in down-turned rifles, helmets, boots and ID tags staged between two Strykers, but the Soldiers' spirit lived on.

Hoffman said the ceremony provided them with closure. The members of 3rd Platoon are already hard at work, preparing their vehicles and equipment so they can carry on the mission begun by their brothers.

"We have no choice, but to move on," said Hoffman. "We knew all of us might not return but we still have a mission to do."

(For the past two newsletters, 2-3 Infantry has been unable to get their newsletter input to us for operational reasons. Well, it's time to catch up on 2-3 Infantry - The Patriots!)

2-3 Infantry Newsletter #1



The march across Iraq

On December 3rd, 2003, 2-3 Infantry and units assigned to support it, left Camp Udairi, Kuwait for their new area of operations. All soldiers and their equipment loaded up on their vehicles for the journey across desert lands and through urban developments. Quite a task considering the amount of moving

pieces and the constant threat of enemy contact. Remarkably, all of the vehicles, soldiers and their equipment made it safely to their destination. A true testament to the planning, preparation and execution of this mission by the soldiers of 2-3 Infantry.



Soldiers enjoy Thanksgiving Day at Camp Udairi with a good meal and a visit from Miss America. She is seen here with soldiers from Alpha Company, 2-3 Inf.

Company Commander extraordinaire, "I think they went that-a-way"??!!



These soldiers lead the way. "A great job by the ADVON really made this movement go smoothly", said MAJ Markert. The ADVON moved in advance of the main body to get the Battalion's new base camp established and proof the route that the Battalion would be moving over.



2-3 Infantry Newsletter #2



2-3 IN on Patrol north of Baghdad

In December 2003, elements of 2-3 IN began pushing out to their newly assigned Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) to conduct operations. Morale is high as commanders and their

soldiers are anxious to put their skills and equipment to the test. "Combat testing the Army's new STRYKER Concept and fighting terrorism on their ground and not ours, makes this unit the best unit in the Army to be in", explains one soldier. This is the feeling most soldiers have about the Battalion mission. "This team moves so fast, the enemy is never going to know what hit them", explains another. With that type of mindset and the tools to facilitate it, 2-3 IN is poised to take the fight to the enemy.



"That's gotta hurt. The vast majority of the Battalions' soldiers who regularly ride in STRYKERS have done this at least once. Usually, it just takes just once

to increase each soldier's situational awareness of how many obstacles there are inside the vehicle.



Embedded Media – assigned to 2-3 IN shortly after arriving in country, three ABC correspondents have continuously covered the Battalion's Operations and movement.



LTC Flowers' STRYKER sports the newly added Slat Armor designed to provide additional protection against the terrorist' weapon of choice against Coalition Forces vehicles – the RPG

296th Brigade Support Battalion

12 December 2003

Dear Frontline families and friends,

I am writing this letter from FOB after a successful move of the Frontline Battalion from Camp Udairi, Kuwait to our current location deep in Iraq. All of our soldiers arrived safely and quickly established support operations for the Arrowhead Brigade.

We have been here for a while and have provided critical combat service and combat health support to all of the Brigade's soldiers. I don't need to remind you that it is through the efforts of the Frontline soldiers that the rest of the Brigade is able to accomplish its mission. In fact, we are part of a great team that all contributes to ultimate mission accomplishment.

One of the duties I am honored with is that of being the "Mayor". As Mayor, I am charged with ensuring a healthy and secure quality of life is rapidly established so the soldiers can get the quality support all deserve. The great team that I have has accomplished nothing short of establishing the infrastructure of a small town to include establishment of multiple shower points, a laundry, two "restaurants", a post office, a chapel, and medical support for all. CSM Erolin and CPT Dolan are my "Deputies" that really make sure things get done and the Mayor's Council meets every other day to hear grievances from the Brigade units.

Finally, I again encourage all of you to get involved and work with your FRGs. Rumors abound and the best source for the truth is from your FRG leader. They get the story, as quickly as I can send it, and it only deals in facts, not speculation.

Thank you for all you do back home so the Frontline Battalion can focus on our mission here. Remember, it's never too late to send your loved ones care packages and as always keep us in your prayers.

FRONTLINE SUPPORT!
LTC Dennis Thompson



SOLDIERS PIN SFC STRIPES ON NEWLY PROMOTED MEMBER.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Greetings Frontline Family! One of the most painful aspects of family separation is not being able to care for those who are most precious to us. Fortunately, God has given us a tool by which we can love and care for those who are both far away and near. Through prayer we can support and accompany those whom we love. Take the time each day to pray for your loved ones. Visualize yourself presenting those you love before God and committing them to His care. You will receive both comfort and joy in doing so and you will be providing "Frontline Support" to your loved ones. Because He Lives,
CH Curlin

HHC, 296th, OUTLAWS

Hello Outlaws! Your spouses have done many great things over the past two months. From leaving Fort Lewis to flying across the globe to Kuwait, to a tactical convoy into Iraq; your loved ones have done every mission exceptionally well. We awarded SSG Rutherford an ARCOM for saving a soldier's life in the DFAC. We also promoted Donell Johnson. The field feeding platoon (FFP) has split to support the six battalions. The staff elements have worked diligently to prepare the battalion for successful operations in the upcoming months. The headquarters section has been the backbone of the company. The Outlaws will definitely be busy this winter supporting the battalion and the SBCT. If you are interested in the FRG please call Wendy. Every soldier would rather be home with their loved ones, but rest assured we are answering the call to duty admirably.

Battle Support!!!
CPT Michael, Wendy and Madison Dolan

DC (Distribution Company) MAD DAWGS

Hello to all Mad Dawg families! We have arrived in theater in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom ready to do great things. After 3 weeks of intense training in Kuwait, we have embarked on our journey North across the berm into Iraq. During our trip North, we saw much of the countryside and many sites including Baghdad and the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. We are excited to finally start our mission. From the Mad Dawg family in the Middle East to the Mad Dawg family in Fort Lewis, we wish you all a happy beginning to the holiday season.

CPT Gibbons



MAD DAWG FORMATION

175TH POSTAL DETACHMENT

The convoy from Camp Udairi was like no other. You can refer back to any training we had had since the briefing at Yakima. All the possible scenarios happened to the 296th BSB. Two down vehicles at once, village children giving the soldiers a warm welcome, and forming our first linear formation while the 175th Postal Company repaired their trailer wheel. It was a truly a learning and unforgettable experience. The confidence level of all the soldiers is at an all time high. They feel better prepared to move further north. God Bless and God Speed.

SPC WILEY

FMC (Forward Maintenance Co.) RATCHET

This past month has been full of new and interesting sights, sounds and activities. The company left over a 7-day window for base shops and CRTs. It took no time for the FMC to start the mission and support at the ship download area and at the Udairi Base camp. Once our equipment arrived, we immediately started

doing very intense weapons and convoy training for the purpose of making us confident and more competent with our systems. We conducted close quarters marksmanship, walking and shooting simultaneously. We conducted a convoy live fire that had the driver and all passengers shooting out the windows and from the top of vehicles. Fortunately, there was no need to fire our weapons as we traveled North into Iraq. The trek demonstrated our discipline and resolve as we geared up: mentally prepared and equipped to succeed. From all of the soldiers in FMC, to all of our spouses, families and friends: we wish you a Happy Holiday Season and a great New Year.

CPT Jayson Stewart

*RIDING A CAMEL
AT CAMP UDAIRI*



BSMC (Brigade Support Medical Co.) “Witch Doctors” Ready to Preserve the Fighting Strength

After one interesting road trip from Kuwait, all BSMC soldiers have arrived safely at beautiful Camp XXXXXX. Scenes from the trip included throngs of waving children, a white-knuckle ride on the freeways of Baghdad, and lots of mud. The weather is surprisingly similar to Seattle sans the warming comfort of cappuccino.

Now that we are at our home-away-from-home we have been working hard to polish our operation. Treatment, patient hold, dental, x-ray, laboratory and mental health operations are all up and running. Additionally, we now have a postal tent, hot shower facilities, and the best Port-o-Potties any of us have ever seen. Morale is high, and we are really pulling together as a close-knit team. It is becoming increasingly obvious that we are ready and able to provide the best possible medical care to the fighting soldiers of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

P.S., Send Toilet Paper!!! – Doc Trapman



**AFTER A 20-HOUR
CONVOY FROM
CAMP UDARI TO
FOB**

1-37 Field Artillery

The Battalion continues to make its Forward Operating Base a livable home. Improvements to the camp happen daily. The availability of email and mail is still very inconsistent but should improve over time. Alpha Battery has the task of the true artilleryman. It is maintaining a firebase where the steel battery provides fires when needed to support the brigade. Bravo and

Charlie Batteries have been tasked with nontraditional missions. They are supporting the brigade by providing route and convoy security and running a temporary Iraqi prisoner detention facility.

During its mission of route and convoy security, Bravo Battery was able to build friendly relations with a town along their route that they are securing. In the inserted photo you can see the Bravo Commander and soldiers drinking tea with the town elders.



The action photo is two of Bravo Battery's vehicles performing its route security mission. As normal with the way HSB is structured they are supporting the battalion in multiple ways. Parts of HSB are supporting Charlie battery with the detention facility. The service and support soldiers are working closely with the 296th BSB. Metro is working closely with 3-29 FA from 4th ID. The remainder of HSB is working on base camp security. The battalion and its soldiers are performing well in every mission. We are looking forward to the Holidays and wish you all a wonderful Holiday season and wish we were there to celebrate with you.



5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment

10 December 2003

Dear wives and family members of the Sykes' Regulars,

Hello from a Forward Operating Base (FOB) located in Iraq. Since our last FRG newsletter the Sykes Regulars and many attached units Camp Udairi, Kuwait to our current location at a FOB. We saw first hand the living conditions of the Iraqi people during the move to our current location. It was very apparent that Saddam Hussein and his cronies had neglected the majority of the people during their reign of power to make better conditions for themselves. The majority of the route was open desert and we were able to pass over the historic Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as well as Baghdad as we continued north to our final location. The total trip took the Sykes Regulars several days to make and we arrived at our current FOB at the beginning of the second week of December.

Upon arrival at the FOB we immediately went to work preparing our living and working area for the business at hand. The FOB has very few of the creature comforts that Camp Udairi had to offer so we are working very hard at making our new home a place we can live comfortably in. The Regulars have a small portion of the FOB where we own tents that can hold XX men. Just outside our tents is located our motor pool where we park our vehicles and prepare them for upcoming operations. Morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) activities are extremely limited at this time, but steps are being taken to improve them, especially phones, e-mail, and regular mail facilities. I ask each of you to be very patient as we are working on making services available for your loved ones to contact you in a timelier manner than snail mail.

My number one priority is to ensure we complete the mission and all Regulars return home safely. Returning all Regulars home safely is my number one priority. Operations are going great as the soldiers continue to show their professionalism and adherence to standards. I hope you are as proud of your husbands and fathers as I am.

Sincerely,
KARL D. REED
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

"Let it snow, let it
snow, let it snow!"



1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment

Since the beginning of December, the Tomahawk battalion has begun full-fledged combat operations in support of the Arrowhead Brigade's mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

At Camp Udairi, Kuwait, we prepared for our movement into Iraq. Vehicles were hardened with sandbags and combat-loaded with supplies and ammunition. The route was studied in detail and dangerous areas identified. Convoy Leaders ensured everyone rehearsed convoy battle drills prior to departure. In a corner of Udairi, we marshaled all of our battalion's vehicles and as well as vehicles from other units that we were escorting north. We did our final pre-combat inspections and radio checks.



Tent-city life at forward operating base.

From there we began the movement north. We moved out in self-sufficient convoys. Each convoy had Strykers for security, medics for casualty evacuation, and wreckers for towing damaged vehicles. Fellow soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division guarded important intersections and refueling points during our movement.

For most of us, it was our first look at the Iraqi countryside that we will get to know so well in the upcoming months. Vast stretches of empty desert slowly turned into the fertile river basin of historic Babylon, the birthplace of agriculture. The sprawling urban landscape of Baghdad revealed the complexity of life in the Middle East. The majority of people in Iraq live in poverty but their efforts at reconstruction were evident from the road. Children swept up rubble and workers rebuilt homes and public buildings. Commerce was bustling and traffic was horrible.

The Tomahawks arrived safely at our new forward operating base. The wreckage of jets and tanks litter the landscape. Wild dogs and large rats roam free. The standard of living is lower than at Camp Udairi, but it is improving daily.

Our motor pool has a fresh layer of gravel and our showers have hot water.

Laundry service has kicked off with a one-week turn around. Three man outhouse-style latrines are being replaced with chemical portaJohns. A PX trailer comes by for two days every other week. We have a MWR tent with satellite TV, phones and Internet resources for recreational use.





The mail is catching up with us. We received our first shipment of mail before we left for Iraq. A week after our arrival in Iraq, the mail arrived in truckloads. Unfortunately, the majority of the battalion is outside of the FOB conducting combat operations and only letter mail can be sent forward to reach them. The battalion mailroom (tent) is stuffed full of packages sent by loved ones. The soldiers will be able to celebrate the gifts of their families and friends when they return just in time for Christmas.

The month of December brought us the most difficult challenge the Tomahawks could ever face. A heinous accident cost us the lives of three of our comrades. Staff Sergeant Steven H. Bridges, Specialist Christopher Wesley, and Specialist Joseph M. Blickenstaff were valued members of the Tomahawk brotherhood and the pain of their loss is felt by every soldier in the battalion. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families.

At the end of December, the operational pace of the battalion is in high gear and running smoothly. The Tomahawks remain vital to the Arrowhead Brigade's mission in the urban centers north of Baghdad. The soldiers welcomed the news of Saddam Hussein's capture. It has bolstered the efforts of the Coalition's mission to bring peace and stability to Iraq. During the holiday season know that your loved ones are thinking of you as we enjoy a special holiday feast prepared by the Tomahawk Field Feeding Team. Best Wishes in the New Year.

Tomahawks!

HHC, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division "Hurons"

HURON 6 sends

Work is steady here for HHC, 3rd Brigade. We are working on keeping the brigade safe here at XXXXXX. We are establishing our routines and conducting our battle drills around the base



camp.

Life here is steadily improving for the Hurons. We've been working on a number of life support projects from building bunkers to ensuring that each tent has lights and electricity.

Christmas trees have sprouted up in and around the company and brigade areas and though we are far away, our thoughts are of home and Christmas with our loved ones.

We all watched on CNN in the TOC as the Coalition announced the capturing of Saddam Hussein. Cheers went up the moment the word came in.

Mail has begun to come in here in droves. We've been getting care packages by the tons so keep up the good work. We truly appreciated every package that arrives.

We wish all of our Huron family here and back home at Fort Lewis Happy Holidays and a joyful New Year.

Egyptian doctor candidate takes on life as Army medic

By Sgt. Jeremy Heckler, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division

FOB, Iraq - For many Army combat medics, the job is a stepping-stone to bigger and better things. One Army medic is bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience studying as a medical doctor to the role of helping Soldiers each and every day.



Soldier is promoted to Chief Warrant Officer Two (CW2) in the Brigade Tactical Operations Center. The CW2's ' terrain analysis team has provided the brigade's units with numerous digital and paper terrain analysis and mapping products.

Spc. Said Alsaïdy, a medic with the brigade surgeon cell, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, is a trained physician who studied in Egypt and brought those skills to the United States.

Alsaïdy came to the United States six years ago as part of his residency in conjunction with the Egyptian government.

"I decided to stay here after my first year and now I go home only to visit," said Alsaïdy, slowly with a smile.

He also began work to become a licensed physician in the United States. Alsaïdy continued to inch closer to his goals. After his residency finished, he was stuck in limbo as he worked toward completing his certification. One test remained.

"We used him as a translator for civil affairs when a Bedouin family was in the impact zone,"

Feeling that Army service was his best way to reach his goals, Alsaïdy entered the Army two and a half years ago and became a combat medic. After initial entry training he arrived at Fort Lewis and was assigned to 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment as a combat medic.

Alsaïdy said his decision was initially controversial because he hadn't talked to his family before he joined, but they wished him luck with his new career.

Now he brings his training and experience to help Soldiers here on deployment. Alsaïdy said he has tried to help others by sharing his experience as a medical resident.

"He brings a lot more to the table than your average medic," said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Peplinski, brigade surgeon cell.

Alsaïdy takes on each task with a smile and gentle personality, whether it is working sick call or digging sandbags.

"He is a humble person and he likes to teach but he isn't pushy," said Peplinski. He said Alsaïdy provides help and assistance to other medics as well as Army doctors.

That positive personality shows through, even while adhering to the tenets of his religion.

As a Muslim during Ramadan, Alsaïdy was required to fast from sun up to sunset as the hot sun beat down on Kuwait. In addition to his skills as a medical technician, it is his experience with the language and culture that helps benefit the Arrowhead Brigade.

During training at Camp Udairi, Kuwait, Alsaïdy used his language skills to help move a Bedouin tribe off a training area. "We used him as a translator for civil affairs when a Bedouin family was in the impact zone," said Peplinski. "He told them politely to leave."

Alsaïdy is waiting on word on his medical board results that bring with it a commission and the full-scale responsibilities of an Army doctor.

Alsaïdy said the prospect of promotion would not alter his life too much.

"Promotion will not change anything," said Alsaïdy. "You get from the Army the same values as an officer that you do as an enlisted soldier."



He said the Army has provided him with a wealth of intangibles.

"The Army is a great world and you can get a lot of values from it such as respect for others and making your own decisions," said Alsaïdy.

Artillery takes on new roles in Iraq

By Sgt. Jeremy Heckler, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division

FOB, Iraq - On a chessboard, the king is the most powerful, yet most immobile piece on the board. One "King of Battle" battalion is proving that they are powerful and mobile too.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment have added infantry operations to their familiar role of providing direct fire support to 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

"Basically our artillery battalion have of our firing batteries each with a different mission," said Capt. Torrey Cady, Battery A, 1st Bn., 37th Field Artillery Reg. commander. "We have one battery performing patrols outside the wire, and one performing perimeter security, and you have ours doing the traditional field artillery role with guns ready to fire."

"Based on the situation it is important to provide the brigade commander with the flexibility and capability that he would not have if we committed all of our batteries to the fire support mission," said Lt. Col. Steve Sliwa, commander, 1st Bn., 37th Field Artillery.

"We patrol areas as part of route reconnaissance to enable the brigade to conduct operations," said Capt. Matthew Simons, Battery B, 1st Bn., 37th Field Artillery.

He said his battery ventures outside the wire to check convoy and other mission routes for possible choke points, secure areas and find the best possible route to pass the brigade through.

While not without its difficulties, the battery warmed to its new role.



Spc. Carl, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, digs a ring around his battery's 155mm howitzer.

"Most of my Soldiers were intrigued by the challenge and they knew they wanted to be part of the mission anyway they could," said Simons.

Prior to leaving their home at Fort Lewis, the battalion performed a variety of crew drills at the Yakima Training Center, centering on traffic control, mounted and dismounted patrols, as well as convoy operations.

"In Udairi we ensured that we were still proficient as gunners as well as worked on urban operations and

dismounted action," said Sliwa.

"The guys were a little apprehensive, but they're excited to go out and do their mission," said Simons. "They want to put their training into effect."

The lone gun battery ensures that not only the brigade is protected, but so are their fellow artillerymen.

Cady said his battery provides support for the brigade by providing counter-mortar fire and supporting patrols with a variety of fire missions.

After arriving at their forward operating base north of Baghdad, the battery went to work setting up their howitzers to take on their first mission within an hour after hitting the ground. With the other batteries providing dismounted Soldiers, Battery A was augmented with additional howitzers.

"We know the tactical picture and know generally where our missions will be so we have all of our guns at the ready," said 1st Lt. Andrew Rolwes, platoon leader, Battery A.

Cady said once the guns are set up the unit switches to a role of position improvement. Soldiers worked 18-hour days building berms, filling sandbags, and digging small ditches around the their positions to provide their howitzers with a place to dig into when they fire.

"We've been setting up a fire base to provide fires of support for the infantry," said Staff Sgt. Eric Williams, Battery A. Williams. He said his fire team set up bunkers and berms and spent a lot of time filling sand bags.

Once in place, the crews drill to make sure that when the time comes they'll be ready for action.

"I want to make sure everything is done to standard so we don't kill any friendlies," said Sgt. Derek White, ammunition team chief, Battery A.

For all of the Soldiers of the "On the Minute" battalion, the goal is to get the mission accomplished.

"I'm ready to support the infantry and put rounds down range," said Spc. Frazier Shelby, Battery A.

And that's just what happened on Dec. 11, when Battery A fired its first rounds of the deployment providing harassment and interdiction fire in support of brigade operations to deal with non-compliant insurgent forces.



1-37 Field Artillery 155mm howitzers at sunset.

Maintenance helps keep Soldiers on the front lines

By Sgt. Jeremy Heckler, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division

FOB, Iraq - As elements of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division roll into combat, a group of Soldiers trains and prepares for their return, ready to put their vehicles and equipment back into the fight.

Soldiers from the Field Maintenance Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion keep the Arrowhead Brigade rolling by maintaining all of their equipment from Strykers to M-16s.

"We are the maintainers of the brigade," said Capt. Jayson Stuart, commander Field Maintenance Co. "There are no other mechanics other than in the field artillery and the S-6 [Signal] outside of this company."

The company is comprised of "slices" that service each battalion, providing weapons system, electronics and vehicle support, said Stuart.

Backing up the forward elements are the support shops here. Flowing from a large hangar are the shops and services that provide needed fixes for all of the Arrowhead Brigade's equipment. Each unit works in conjunction with civilian contractors for support.

"Contractors are an integrated part of the brigade and provide an additional asset for the brigade commander," said Stuart. He said that for every system the brigade has, there is a contractor to assist in the maintenance for it. The military and civilians work together on a variety of missions.

Stuart said the facility supports wheeled vehicles, electronics, communications, the engineers and a variety of other equipment. One of the key shops on the maintenance yard is the wheeled vehicle section.



A soldier from weapons section, Field Maintenance Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, demonstrates the proper way to load a M2 Browning .50 caliber machine gun.

"Right now we're patching up vehicles that made the convoy from Udayri (Kuwait) to here," said Sgt. John Kelly, wheeled vehicle mechanic.

Kelly said the first day at FOB the shop was full of vehicles with a variety of wear and tear issues, from punctured tires to downed fuel pumps.

"Most of these vehicles have traveled a lot farther than they ever have," said Kelly. "It is more work than they normally see." Helping keep the brigade connected, the communications



A soldier from the communications section, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, works to unscrew radio equipment out of a HEMTT support vehicle.

section works on a variety of equipment from FBCB2 repair to hand held radios.

"We got Soldiers who can do the basics," said Spc. Daniel Pieri, communications section. "When they can't get it working they come to me."

He said the bumping and harsh terrain of the region affects the sensitive radio and computer equipment inside each vehicle.

"Sometimes stuff just goes bad," said Pieri. "The computers are not

meant to bounce around like that."

He said the fix could be as simple as changing a bad wire. The armament section provided the brigade with the means of keeping their weapons ready against any enemy threat.

"The main mission of the armament section is small arms," said Stuart. "Basically they'll repair anything that can shoot."

"We're support for maintenance of about 9,000 pieces of small arms and sighting systems in the brigade," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Williams, Field Maintenance Company, armaments section.

Prior to leaving on deployment, the base shops worked around the clock to ensure that each Soldier's weapon was ready for whatever they may find in Iraq.

"Back in the rear the whole brigade engaged all of the weapons to make sure they're ready to go," said Spc. Jason Santiago, Field Maintenance Company, armament repair specialist. "A lot of the time we didn't leave until seven or eight o'clock at night and put in a lot of man hours."

"We worked many of nights including Saturday and Sunday to make sure the weapons systems were ready to go," said Williams.

"There is an ebb and flow to our operations tempo that is cyclic to the brigade's activity," said Stuart. He added that when the brigade is on a mission the BSB tempo is a lot slower, but picks up before the brigade goes on a mission and right afterward.

Upon their arrival in Kuwait and later to Iraq, the maintenance mission slowed a little, allowing them the opportunity to train on force protection missions. The training ranged from convoy protection to the proper use of crew-served weapons.

"Right now we're doing what I like to do which is train Soldiers," said Williams.



A soldier from the communications section, Field Maintenance Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, peels electrical tape as he works on a communications cable in a HEMTT vehicle.

Unfortunately, we deployed here with no Stryker, no Hummer, no truck, not even a bicycle or skateboard. I'd like to start a "grass roots" campaign to get a Mini-Stryker for the FRG Newsletter editor. VOTE Yes!



"All I want for Christmas are some new cool wheels, new cool wheels, new cool wheels."

"All I want for Christmas some are new cool wheels, new cool wheels, new cool wheels."

(and we promise to share with the CSM)

And speaking of the CSM, here he is taking a short break in the TOC to read through an old issue of the Fort Lewis Northwest Guardian.



The crews went through how to load and fire the weapon and learned how to clear any type of misfire that might occur.

"Every Soldier knows what I know," said Williams. "If I know how to lock and fire the weapon then all my Soldiers should know."

"If the person firing the weapon goes down then someone needs to go up and take his place," said Santiago.

The goal of the company is to keep the brigade rolling.

"These Soldiers continue to amaze me," said Stuart. "They are extremely proficient and it doesn't matter what is going on they just stoically go about what they do."

"We make the brigade go boom, if we don't do our job, they can't do that," said Williams.

And now a note from the editor:

As the editor of "The Arrowhead Family Readiness Group Newsletter," my right-hand man and I have to travel a lot of miles around the basecamp and elsewhere to bring these great stories to you.

This is a responsibility that we hold dear because it keeps you, the families somewhat up to date on how things are going here in Iraq.

CHAPLAIN CORNER

Love and prayers to all of you! The chaplains continue to provide optimum religious support to all soldiers of the brigade. Attendance in chapel, Bible studies, prayer meetings, and other chapel activities is growing among soldiers. We are planning a number of events over the Christmas holidays—a Christmas eve service of "Carols by Candlelight, Catholic Midnight Mass, Christmas Day services, and an Arrowhead Holiday Companion Talent Show.

We also have a Brigade Morale Tent up and running. We are showing movies, there are board games, electronic games, music, fun and relaxation, donated sundry items, food and snacks, and within the next day phones to call home. The phones will create long lines of soldiers waiting to call their loved ones, so please be patient. Trust me, the soldiers are very anxious to talk to you. From all of us in Iraq in 3rd SBCT have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Chaplain Garcia

Brigade Chaplain
And Finally...

CTSF-STRYKER:

1-CTSF-NW has had a name change. Because of the comprehensive responsibility the organization will have for all fielded Stryker brigades and the ongoing support they will need the name is now CTSF-STRYKER. This was directed by Colonel Charles McMaster, Director for CTSF. We are delighted with the name change because it does capture the comprehensive effort we expend to support SBCTs.

2-Like everyone at, we have been suffering through the cold and damp--we all kinda thought the desert would be warm but fortunately brought enough clothing to stay warm. Love our heaters also.

3-Our two washing machines and dryers go all the time. Our Tocmeisters (Greg Flom and Bruce Parent) run a roster that gives all a crack at the washers and dryers so we're clean most of the time.

4-The break through in mail, which has caused some stuff to dribble in, has been a wonderful thing. Spirits are very high and we really appreciate the work done by the team at Ft. Lewis to get us packages and Christmas greetings. We all have received lots of positive feedback about the Team Blue Newsletter published by Tamara Harris and wish to offer a collective HOOAH and Thank You to Tammy.

5-Our All Hands session at 0700 each morning is fast and furious and features:

- neat pictures of us doing a variety of things
- a great intelligence and weather update by our ASAS guys Jeff and Cody
- too many references by Beau to his Cajun Daddy
- Allen speak (know what I mean--here is my question)-this is from a technical whiz who can't get his AKO account straight.

6-We are well and will miss our loved ones and family for the Holidays and want to send them our best wishes and love. We will be honored to serve Christmas Dinner to the soldiers of 3/2 so they are free of the responsibility of being detailed to do this. We're looking forward to it and will dish up some good chow, gratitude and love with each portion.

7-Keep those cards, letters and emails coming. We really appreciate them. We're busily preparing for our next mission and will provide more details about it when it is appropriate. We all take a lot of pride in the exemplary manner that 3/2 SBCT has handled the first part of their mission and are sure it will continue and we will work very hard to sustain the level of excellent support we have always had for the brigade.

Now let's wrap up this newsletter with some photos...



A Soldier from the Brigade Engineer Section passes care packages out that contained toilet paper, rice krispy treats and juicy fruit gum. Morale was high!



LTC XXXX, 1-37 FA, talks with COL XXXXXX during the battle update brief via the "plasma"



LTG Sanchez, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven (CJTF-7) Commander visits the Arrowhead TOC in early December. Below he visits the S2 Section.



See you in 2004!